

[24 April, 2001]

RAJYA SABHA

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) and (b) subsequent to the decision regarding removal of import restrictions, the Government has been implementing a conscious policy of adjustments in customs duties to provide necessary protection to the domestic producers. Towards that end, customs duty on almost all the items on which QRs were to be removed was raised to the peak rate of 35% in the budget for the year 2000-2001. Import duty on sugar was raised from 25% to 60% in February, 2000. Subsequent to the budget, import duty on skimmed milk powder was raised from 0% to 60% on chicken legs from 35% to 100%, on rice from 0% to 70%, on arecanut from 35% to 100% and on apple from 35% to 50%

Import duty on edible oil was raised twice, in June and again in November last year. In the budget for the year 2001-2002, the custom duty on coconut, copra, tea and coffee has been raised from 35% to 70%. The import duty on various refined edible oils excepting soyabean oil has been raised to 85%. Similarly, the import duty on various crude edible oils excepting soyabean oil has been raised to 75% with a concession of 20% on the imports of crude palm oil made by sick Vanaspati Units.

The imports are being closely monitored and Government will take all appropriate steps including increase in customs duty, within the bound rates, whenever the situation so arises.

Action Against Mekaster Group of Companies

***554. SHRI GOPALSINH G. SOLANKI:** Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Mekaster International Pvt. Ltd. and Mekaster Trading Corporation, Ansal Bhavan, New Delhi, are representing different foreign firms and are registered with Director General Supply and Disposal (DGS and D);

(b) whether both the firms have participated in a tender floated by DGS and D for purchase of Telemetry System and suppressed facts in order to procure the tender; and .

(c) if so, the details thereof and what action has been taken to blacklist the Mekaster Group for suppressing fact before the DGS and D?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) to (c) M/s Mekaster International Pvt. Ltd. and M/s Mekaster Trading Corporation are currently not registered with DGS & D as Indian Agents. However, in the past, both were registered with DGS&D as Indian Agents of different foreign Principals. In the tender floated for purchase of Telemetry System, only M/s Mekaster International Pvt. Ltd., Ansal Bhavan, New Delhi had quoted. Further, no suppression of facts was observed in their tender.

Quantitative Restrictions on Handloom and Handicrafts

*555. SHRI J. CHITHARANJAN:

SHRI V.V. RAGHAVAN:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Quantitative Restrictions (QRs) on the remaining 715 items also have been removed *w.e.f.* April 1st, 2001;

(b) if so, what are these items under different categories;

(c) whether Government are considering a proposal to retain the QRs on certain items like handloom and handicrafts to protect the domestic industry; and

(d) if so, the details thereof;

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) to (d) Import restrictions on 715 items have been removed with effect from 01.04.2001. The 715 items include 147 agricultural products, 331 textile products and 237 other manufactured products. However, even after removal of quantitative restriction, imports will be subject to applicable customs' duty, additional customs duty and